

Number Three.

I AM-AFRAID

THERE IS A GOD!

ARGENT

FOUNDED ON FACT.



Boston:
PUBLISHED BY FORD AND DAMRELL,
TEMPERANCE PRESS, WILSON'S LANE.

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(SARGENT, *Lucy Mann*)

Third Edition.



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TO THE READER.

For an unbeliever in the doctrines of revelation, we can pray, that God would help his unbelief. For an unbeliever in the existence of a God, we can scarcely frame words, in the form of a suitable petition. We shudder at our own presumption, as we approach the mercy-seat.

A Deist or an Atheist, in former days, might have been occasionally found, in our cities, wandering and alone; his hand, like the hand of Ishmael, against every man, and every man's hand against him.

It is not so, at the present time. Infidelity and Atheism plant their standard in the very heart of our metropolis. Yet, in the words of our Declaration of Rights, "It is the right as well as the *duty* of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the SUPREME BEING, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe."

For the miserable individual, who disbelieves,

M. J. P. 1800

all by himself, and troubles not the world with the account of those crooked paths and painful processes, by which he descends into those awful depths, where he lies forlorn ; for him we have no other feeling, than that of commiseration.

For the abandoned wretch, who dares, in the most open and audacious manner, to lay his unhallowed hands upon the book of God,—not to expound the scripture, but to prove the word of God to be a lie ;—who can teach nothing, because he knows nothing ;—who gathers around him a group of both sexes and all ages, and endeavors to prepare them for a career of infamy, by rending away, one after another, the posts and pillars, upon which the social compact is sustained ;—who would take away the hope, that makes the humble Christian happy, and leave him nothing but mourning, in his dying hour, for the oil of joy ; who vends books, indecent and abominable in their character, and wilfully wicked in their design ; for such a corrupt and profligate scoundrel as this, we have no other feeling than a sentiment of unmeasured and unmingled abhorrence.

Can it be believed, that a wretch, so depraved,

can be found upon the earth, who will dare to show his contempt for God's holy word, by hurling the sacred book across the room, in a public assembly of males and females!—Such is the fact. We leave the reflections to those, who well know what offences are punishable by indictment at common law, and to those who desire not to leave their official duties unperformed.

The murderer, the thief, the corrupter of innocence, the advocate of "*liberal*" principles, the consistent villain, who shudders at nothing but the imputation of hypocrisy, who admits the charge of seduction, but defies the world to show, that he ever laid claim to superior sanctity, these and their confederates, who are the main pillars of infidel societies, are seldom cold water men. The stimulus of intoxication impels its youthful votary to the gaming house or the brothel; and then, to relieve the conscience, yet unseared, of its oppressive load, it conducts him to the schools of infidelity; where he is happy to be told, and struggles to believe, that no crime, however atrocious, can entail upon its perpetrator any punishment, beyond the grave; that "the judgment" shall never come;

and that the ideas of a God and of a future state are perfectly absurd. Schools of infidelity are obviously the preparatory houses for every variety of crime ; and the offender, stained with crime, and trembling with alarm, flies back for absolution ; and is comforted, while he listens to the proclamation of a miserable being, who is probably remarkable for nothing, but his ignorance and his audacity, that there is no God.

Life is passing like a dream. The grave ere long will demand its tribute. No human being can demonstrate, that there is not a God ; and the last hour of the infidel may bring with it an age of agony ; and his soul may be filled with the tremendous apprehension, that there is !

I AM AFRAID

THERE IS A GOD!

My father was a respectable mechanic in the town of ———. On the subject of religion there existed the most perfect unanimity between my father and my mother; and their whole lives were ample illustrations of their confidence in the promises of God, and of their firm and sustaining belief in the precepts and doctrines of Christianity. My parents were both members of the Temperance Society, and earnest promoters of the cause, to the extent of their limited influence and ability.

They were the parents of three children, Absalom, Bethiah, and myself. At the age of forty-five, I look back upon their simple man-

ners and consistent piety, with a feeling of affectionate respect. The village of ——— which was our place of residence, retains its primitive simplicity, such as it was, some forty years ago, in a degree beyond almost any village in the commonwealth : not because it is situated, at a very remote distance from the metropolis, for such is not the fact ; but its water privileges have not yet attracted the serious attention of the manufacturer ; it lies abroad from all the routes of existing canals and contemplated railways ; it has not been so fortunate as to become the residence of any man of fortune, retired from the bustle of the world ; and it has never given birth to any more distinguished personage, than General Driver, who keeps the public house ; is chairman of the selectmen ; commands the militia ; and represents the town in the General Court.

The village pound, and the old gunhouse, with its red doors and weather beaten flagstaff, are just where they were, when I used to gather to the spot, with all the children of the village,

to see Washington and Adams dragged forth upon the common, on the fourth of July ; for such were the titles of two brass four pounders, intrusted to the care of Captain Solomon Dow. The Reverend Mr. Cooley is still the parson of the parish ; and, although a new generation has sprung up, since the days of my boyhood, there is enough remaining of all, that once was, to enable the memory to play the architect adroitly, and rebuild the edifice, with all its parts and proportions, within and without. Even of the pulpit cushion, upon which the good man has administered, for forty years, there is enough remaining to settle the question of identity. The young women enter the meeting house, with sprigs of fennel, and the boys, with pond lilies in their hands ; old Caleb Kidder sits in the singers' seat, with his pitch pipe, just where he used to sit ; and Madam Moody, at the age of eighty, in her old brocade, occupies the same seat, in the broad aisle, on the right, as you enter, which she occupied full forty years ago.

It has pleased God to bless me, in my

basket and my store ; and I never feel so grateful, for the bounties of Providence, as when I reflect, that they have enabled me to succor and sustain my honored parents, in their dark days, and to repay them, in some measure, for all their kindness ; which I never fully appreciated, till I became a parent myself. They still live in the old cottage ; and, after many afflictions, from a quarter, whence they had anticipated nothing but rays of comfort, in their latter days, they present a pattern of Christian resignation to God's holy will.

My parents, as I have stated, were pious people. They were in the practice of morning and evening devotion. My father never omitted it, unless he was prevented by sickness ; and, however pressed for time, he never departed from a slow and reverential manner of performing it. " Whatever business may be delayed," he used sometimes to say, " the Lord's work should never be hurried." Notwithstanding the daily precept and example of this worthy couple, they were called to a bitter trial. The wall of strength, which they had

endeavored to build round about them, the safeguard of religion, which they had raised for the protection of their lambs, was not sufficient for them all:—the wolf leapt into the fold, and snatched one from their grasp—they were the parents of a **DRUNKARD** and an **INFIDEL** !

I have often thought, that the simple narrative of their blasted hopes would furnish materials, for an interesting tale.

Upon a Saturday morning, in the month of June, 18—, a young gentleman, of very genteel appearance, arrived with a fine horse and stylish gig, at the door of **Driver's** tavern ; and, delivering his equipage to the hostler, requested accommodations, for a day or two, during his stay in the village. It was soon rumored about, that the stranger was no less a personage, than **Mr. Bobb**, active partner in the firm of **Bobb and Binnacle**. There could be no reasonable doubt upon the subject, for he had communicated the information himself, before he had been an hour in the village, to the hostler and the barkeeper ; incidentally dropping a hint, now and then, of their extensive operations,

and very considerable interest, in various manufacturing establishments. The manufacturing fever was, at this period, approaching that remarkable crisis, after which so many subjects were reduced to a condition of weakness, from which they have not entirely recovered, at the present day. The mania had not actually extended to our village; but the proprietors of land, bounding on the river, evidently considered their estates of greater importance. The value of water privileges, the law of flowage, and the prodigious profits of manufacturers became topics of frequent conversation at the tavern and the grocery. Squire Gookin openly and frequently avowed, that he would not sell his meadow lot, above the red bridge, for six times the sum it cost him; and he has faithfully kept his word, to the present day.

Mr. Bobb had scarcely refreshed himself and his apparel, after a dusty drive, with a basin of pure water and a clothes brush, before he inquired of General Driver, who was stirring up toddy for the selectmen, who were in session at the inn, whether there were not

some good privileges on the river, that might be bought up, on speculation. The General mentioned Squire Gookin's, and two or three others. He offered the services of his son, to show Mr. Bobb the locations ; and apologized for not being able to go himself ; but it was haying time, and the press for toddy was so great, that he could not leave.

While this conversation was going on, Enoch Smith, who went, I remember, by the name of Skyrocket Enoch, because his stories flew so swiftly, and ended so frequently in smoke ; Enoch, who had listened attentively to the conversation, lost no time in repairing to Squire Gookin's, and assuring him, that a gentleman of great wealth had come from the city, on purpose to buy his water privilege. Shortly after, Mr. Bobb and the General's son were seen going in the direction of the river ; and it was rather amusing to observe the Squire carefully watching their operations, from behind his corn-barn.

On Sabbath morning, Mr. Bobb was ushered into General Driver's pew, by no less a

personage than the General himself ; and it was universally agreed, that a prettier man never walked up the broad aisle, than Mr. Bobb. Katy Cummings, who was too much of a wag, ever to get a husband, admitted that he had disturbed her devotions, and that she should have set her cap for him, if he had not appeared to take so much comfort in his whiskers. One young woman obviously attracted the stranger's attention, in an extraordinary degree ; decidedly the prettiest girl in the parish ; no other than my sister, Bethiah. In the afternoon, the constant direction of his eyes towards my father's pew became so very particular, as to attract the notice, and provoke the smiles of more than one of Mr. Cooley's congregation ; and, in the evening, young Mr. Driver conceived himself authorized, by his intimacy with our family, to introduce Mr. Bobb to our acquaintance. He was evidently desirous of making himself agreeable, and he certainly succeeded. It was apparent to me, from the very first moment of his introduction, that Bethiah was not at all deficient in that

mother wit, which enables a young woman to divine, if a gentleman's visit be intended for herself ; and I was not less assured, in my own mind, that she was pleased, that it should be. His desire to ingratiate himself with every member of our family rendered his manners extremely respectful and modest ; and we heard little of the extensive operations of Bobb and Binnacle. He repeated his visit, upon the following day ; and, whatever might have been the measure of his original interest in manufacturing speculations, it soon became apparent, that he had lost all recollection of Squire Gookin and his water privileges, in a subject of a more absorbing nature.

His visit in the village was extended beyond the period, which he had assigned for his departure ; and he was finally summoned away, by a letter from Mr. Binnacle, informing him of an unexpected pressure in the money market. His attentions to my sister were very particular ; and the manner, in which those attentions were received, left no doubt of the favorable impression, which had

been made upon her mind, perhaps upon her heart. The possibility of such a consequence had occurred to both my parents. Bethiah was an excellent girl, but her mind was not altogether free from a romantic bias. My father thought proper to converse with her, upon the danger of indulging any other feelings, than those of good will, towards an individual, of whom she knew so little, as of this agreeable stranger.—“Dear father,” said she, bursting into tears, “we are engaged, provided you and mother will give your consent, and I am sure you will not refuse it, when you come to know Mr. Bobb, as well as I do.”—“Gracious heaven!” cried her astonished father, “engaged!—know him as well as you do!—my child, you are but seventeen years of age, and you have seen this young man every day, for a week; what can you know of him?”—“Dear father,” replied this infatuated girl, “I know every thing; he has told me all about his family, and his situation in life. His partner, Mr. Binnacle, is a retired sea captain, of handsome property. He knows little or noth-

ing of the business, in which they are engaged, and leaves every thing to the management of Mr. Bobb.”—“Leaves every thing to the management of Mr. Bobb!” exclaimed my father, in a tone almost of derision. “Bethiah, as you respect my paternal authority, and value my happiness and your own, proceed no farther in this rash business, until I have made such inquiries as are dictated by common prudence.”

My poor father conferred with my mother, as a matter of course; and blamed himself severely, for permitting an attractive young man, of whom he knew so little, to jeopardize the happiness of his child. “Perhaps,” said my mother, “he may be all that he represents himself to be.”—“It may be so,” said my father, “but I will suffer the matter no longer to remain in uncertainty. I will go, to-morrow, to the city; and make all proper inquiries, on the subject.”—Without disclosing his intention to any other person, he set forth, at an early hour.

Mr. Bobb had left behind a zealous advo-

cate, in my brother Absalom, who was one year younger than Bethiah. Indeed it would be difficult to say, upon which of the two this young man had produced the more favorable impression. It is sometimes amusing to contemplate the fantastical grounds, upon which youthful lovers will rest a conviction, that they are destined, by heaven, for each other. After exhausting all other arguments upon her mother, in justification of her conduct, Bethiah admitted, that she had been greatly surprised, and perhaps somewhat influenced in her feelings, by discovering, that the initials of Bethiah Atherton Jennings, when reversed, were also the initials of Julius Augustus Bobb.

My father returned, on the following day. He had ascertained, that Bobb and Binnacle were engaged, to some extent, in the manufacturing business. The depths of that ocean of speculation were, at that time, altogether unfathomable. But my father evidently inclined to the hopeful side of the problem. He had received no information unfavorable to the moral character of Mr. Bobb. He was es-

teemed an amiable man, by his acquaintances, and perfectly honorable in his dealings. His parents had been free livers, and died just about the time, when they had run through a very handsome property. My father was pained to hear, that this young man had probably received no serious impressions on the subject of religion, in his youth ; but he was gratified, on the other hand, to learn, that he was a member of the temperance society.

There are matters of deeper interest, in which it is desirable to engage the reader's attention ; and I will therefore pass over this portion of our family history, in a summary manner. My parents smiled upon the hopes of their daughter. Bethiah, in due time, became the wife of Mr. Bobb, and went to reside in the city. The dawn of their married life was as bright and clear, as the dawn of an April day. Would to heaven, this were the only point, in which there existed a resemblance between them. They had not been married six months, before a report was circulated in the village, that Bobb and Binnacle

had failed. This report was readily traced to Skyrocket Enoch, who had returned with a wagon from the city. My father went to examine Enoch, upon the subject, who stated, that he had heard of a manufacturing firm, that would fail shortly, but did not hear their names ; he guessed it must be Bobb and Binnacle ; and as he had been full four and twenty hours a coming up, he reckoned, they must have failed, by the time he arrived. Our apprehensions were excited, on the following day, by a letter from Mr. Bobb, pressing my father to come down, as soon as possible. He complied with this request, and was informed, that there was not the least cause of alarm ; but the pressure for money was so great, that they were compelled to ask his assistance. They were in want, at that time, of \$7000, and could obtain it of the Bank, with his endorsement. It was rather more than all my father was worth in the world, but the case was urgent. He put his name upon their paper ; the \$7000 were swallowed up in the whirlpool of their complicated concerns, like a

ship's long boat, in the maelstrom of Norway. In a fortnight, they were bankrupts, stock and fluke; and my father's little property, the laborious accumulation of many years, went before the torrent, like chaff before the driving storm.

If, upon such an occasion, there be any consolation, and undoubtedly there is, in universal and respectful sympathy, my poor, old father had an abundant share of that good thing. The creditors were very considerate; they were commercial men, in whom the spirit of trade had not vanquished the spirit of compassion and humanity.

My father surrendered all his little property, requesting permission to retain nothing but the tools of his trade, which were secured to him by law, and the old family bible; but the creditors relinquished their claim upon his furniture, and he gave them possession of his homestead, which was sold with his consent, subject to his right of redemption, under the mortgage. "God's will be done," said he, as he locked up the old house, for the last

time, preparatory to the delivery of the key to the new proprietor.

He was sixty-three years of age, when he commenced life anew. He went with my mother, who bore her misfortunes quite as well as her husband, to board with a neighboring farmer, a portion of whose barn he speedily converted into a temporary work-shop; and, the next morning, the old sign of "DAVID JENNINGS, HOUSEWRIGHT," long laid by, and which had been familiar to the villagers, for thirty years, was cleared of its dust and cobwebs, and placed over the door.

"Just what I should have expected," said Parson Cooley, when he first heard of it. "David Jennings would sooner take up the implements of honest industry, than add to the burthen of any other man." The next Sabbath he preached an excellent sermon, on resignation under afflictive trials. As he went home, he observed to his wife, "Squire Gookin has lost a few sheep of the rot, and his countenance exhibited the deepest distress, during the whole time I was preaching; while

David Jennings and his wife, who have lost all they have in the world, presented the happiest examples I have ever witnessed of cheerful submission to God's holy will."

Almost immediately after my sister's marriage, my brother Absalom, agreeably to a previous arrangement, went to the city, as an under clerk, in the store of Bobb and Binncle; and, at the time of their failure, being a young man of good abilities, he soon found employment in another establishment.

From my early youth, I had a partiality for a seafaring life; and I have followed the profession, ever since I was sixteen years old. I had doubled that age, at the period of my sister's marriage, and arrived from Bombay, just a week before the ceremony took place. In about six weeks afterward, I sailed for Calcutta, and was absent, during the period of these calamities, and, indeed, for nearly three years, without any direct intelligence from home. I had heard a rumor of the failure, but nothing of my father's misfortune.

I arrived at the port of New York, in May,

18—, and taking the mail stage, reached Worcester, the nearest town, upon the route, to the village where I was born. I then obtained a horse and chaise, and came to the old homestead a little after midnight. I rapped at the door, and, after a short interval, the window was opened, and a voice, my father's, as I supposed, for it was raining hard, and I could not perfectly distinguish, inquired who was there. "Don't you know the voice of your own son?" said I.—"Friend," replied the person at the window, "the tavern is only a quarter of a mile off, and, if you are in your right mind, I advise you to find your way to it."—The window was immediately put down, but not till I was satisfied, that the voice was not the voice of my father.—I have heard breakers over the lee bow, in a darker night; but never did the blood rush so violently to my head, as at that moment. "My parents are dead then," said I, involuntarily, as I placed my hand upon my forehead.—At that moment, the window was opened again, and I heard a female voice, within the apart-

ment, exclaiming in a tone of earnestness, "I have no doubt it is he."—"What is your name?" said the man at the window.—The heart of the patriarch was not more full, when he put the question to his brethren, *I am Joseph, doth my father yet live?* than mine, when I put a similar inquiry, in relation to my old father and mother.—The occupants were soon in motion; and, the door was opened by farmer Weeks, a worthy man, who proceeded to rake open the fire, while his good wife began to prepare some refreshments. They persuaded me to remain, till daylight, and gave me a particular account of my father's misfortunes. I learned also from them, that Bobb and Binnacle had separated, and that the latter had returned to his old profession. Farmer Weeks observed, that my father and mother bore up, under the loss of their property, wonderfully well; but he admitted, that some other troubles, within the last two years, had made a deeper impression upon their minds. I gathered from the hints, which the farmer dropped, with evident reluctance, that their

unhappiness was caused chiefly by the misconduct of my brother Absalom.

As soon as the day dawned, I proceeded to the house, in which farmer Weeks informed me my parents had continued to reside, since their removal from the cottage. As I drew near, I observed a person coming from the door, with a broad axe over his shoulder, and a carpenter's apron : his quick step, for a moment, deceived me ; but a second glance assured me of the truth—it was my old father, going forth to his morning's work. He knew me, in an instant, and dropping his tools upon the ground, threw his arms about my neck, and wept like a child. We returned together to the house. My poor mother, who appeared to have suffered more, in her bodily health, in consequence of her domestic affliction, was overjoyed at my return. Even the kind people, where my parents resided, appeared to think themselves fairly entitled to rejoice with those, who rejoiced, to whom they had given the surest evidence of their sympathy in affliction.

“Poor Bethiah,” said I, as soon as we were

left to ourselves, "what is her situation, and that of her husband?"—"Bethiah," said my father, "is the mother of three little girls. Her husband, I trust, is becoming a religious man. They are very poor, and have hard work to get along in the world. But Bethiah says there never was a kinder husband. Their troubles seem to have attached them more closely to each other."—"And Absalom," said I, "where is he?"—"In the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity," replied my poor father, with an expression of the deepest affliction, while my old mother covered her face with her hands. "For Heaven's sake, dear father," said I, "what is the matter, has he committed any crime?"—"Absalom," said he, in a voice, scarcely articulate for grief, "is a **DRUNKARD** and an **INFIDEL** ! While he continued with his sister and her husband, he was virtuous and happy. After the failure, he found employment elsewhere ; fell among evil associates, and was ruined. He frequented the theatre, and other scenes of dissipation, and speedily acquired habits of tippling. In

a moment of intoxication, he was persuaded to go to a meeting of infidels ; their doctrines were new to him ; and, however monstrous, their very novelty excited an interest in his mind : he went again, and again, and became a convert. He was not in the habit, at this period, of going frequently to his sister's residence ; and the mischief was accomplished, before I had any knowledge of his evil courses. At length, I received a letter from Bethiah and her husband, communicating their fears. I repaired to the city, the next day ; and, arriving in the evening, I inquired for Absalom, at his lodgings ; and was informed, that he might probably be found at the lecture room. I obtained directions, and repaired to the spot without delay. I entered a room, in which was a collection of males and females, of decent appearance, and took my seat, in a retired corner.

After a few minutes, I discovered my misguided son, and endeavored to keep myself concealed from his observation. Presently the lecturer commenced. He was a tall man,

with round shoulders, and very gray hair. I should think him over sixty years of age ; his face was florid ; his eyes were contracted, down-cast, and expressive of cunning and duplicity. I should not have been willing to trust any man, who had so much the appearance of a knave. But what was my horror, when this gray-headed castaway threw the volume of eternal life across the room, and pronounced God's holy word no better than a lie ! What were my emotions, when I beheld this poor miserable wretch, tottering, as it were, upon the brink of the grave, abusing the lamp of reason, by employing it to mislead his fellow-creatures to destruction ; prostituting the highest gift of God, to prove, that there is no God ! At length this hoary-headed scoundrel exhausted his stock of sacrilege and folly, and resumed his seat. The meeting broke up ; and, keeping my eye upon my wretched boy, I followed his steps into the street. He turned into a dram-shop, in the neighborhood of the pandemonium from which he had so lately descended. I saw him, while my eyes wept tears of anguish,

pour the accursed poison down his throat. I forbore to interrupt his orgies, in their present stage ; I determined, agonizing as it might be to a father's heart, to observe his progress. In a short time, he sallied forth ; and again I followed his steps.

After winding through several streets, he associated himself with an abandoned woman, who was strolling purposely alone ; and they repaired, arm in arm, to another dram shop, of a more genteel description. They passed into a recess, provided with curtains for concealment. I stood, at a little distance from the door, and in a short time, I saw a servant conveying liquors and refreshments to the recess, and closing the curtains, as he retired.—Now, thought I, is my time ;—I passed into the shop, and, taking up a light, proceeded to the spot, and drawing back the curtain, held the light before my face.—This child of sin was perfectly thunderstruck : at first, he attempted to escape ; but I held him firmly by the arm. His vile companion, and a brazen-faced Jezebel she was, had already fled. Absalom, said

I, as I relinquished my hold, and took my seat before him, do you not believe there is a God? —No—was the reply, in a voice of drunken desperation!—Father of mercy, I exclaimed, has it come to this! and looking, for an instant, at his feverish face and bloodshot eye, and contrasting the object before me, with the treasured recollections of my happy boy, I buried my face in my hands, and sobbed aloud.—When I raised my head, he had gone.—Inquiries were repeatedly made at his boarding house, but in vain. It was solemnly affirmed, that he had not returned there. I have never seen him from that hour.—But all this comes not from the ground. I am blessed beyond my deserts. Bethiah is happy, in her poverty; and her husband is becoming a better man for a better world; your dear mother enjoys a tolerable share of health; my own health and strength are excellent, and I have enough to do; and, to crown all, you, my first born, are alive and well, and safely returned to us again. And now, as I see breakfast is nearly ready, let us thank our Heavenly Father for

all his blessings, and for the special Providence of your return."

Farmer Weeks exerted himself to find accommodations for his family, as soon as possible ; I paid off my father's mortgage ; and my parents were speedily restored to the old cottage. The tools were carefully collected, and re-placed in the carpenter's chest ; and the sign of DAVID JENNINGS, HOUSEWRIGHT, was returned once more to its resting place, in the garret. The affectionate respect of the villagers, for my parents, was clearly manifested, in the cheerful congratulations, and hearty shakes by the hand, which met them at every step : and, when my father was in search of a horse cart to carry back his furniture, and the rest of his little property, the neighbors gathered round, and took it, at once, in their hands and upon their shoulders, and the whole removal was accomplished in half an hour. Skyrocket Enoch, who, with all his relish for the marvellous, was the most amiable mischief maker in the village, flew, like a shuttlecock, from house to house, breaking looking glasses and crocke-

ry ware, in the best natured manner imaginable.

After my parents had been resettled on the homestead, I visited my sister and her husband in the city. I found her, at lodgings, up three pairs of stairs, in an obscure but respectable part of the metropolis ; and, receiving a direction to the first door, on the right hand, on the upper landing, I proceeded to find my way. On reaching the door, I heard a voice, which I knew, was Bethiah's ;—I listened for a moment ;—she was getting one of her little ones to sleep, with the same lullaby, that our good mother had sung to us all.—I tapped at the door ;—she opened it herself ;—in an instant we were locked in each other's arms.

She was thin and pale, but I did not perceive, that she had lost any of her beauty. Her fine light hair, and bright blue eyes, and beautiful teeth, for which she had always been remarkable, still remained, like the prominent points in some interesting landscape ; where the woodcapped hill, and the winding stream, and the natural cascade are beautiful still, though

the sun may have departed, and the moon alone may display them, by her paler lamp.

“Brother,” said she, “look at these,” pointing to her little children, her bright face covered with smiles and tears, like the soft lightning and gentle showers of an August evening, when the elements are playing witch-work with the western sky. Her first born were twins ; they were tottling about the room, and the baby was in the cradle. “They are lovely children,” said I, “but where is your husband ?”—“He is coming home now,” she replied, “I see him from the window.”—I followed the direction of her finger,—I should not have known him. “Three years,” said I, “have altered his appearance prodigiously.”—“Oh, yes,” she replied, “we often laugh over the recollections of our foolish dreams. We have done with castle-building in the air ; and are building, I trust, upon a better foundation. My husband is one of the best husbands ; he is getting to be one of the best Christians also.”—I was sufficiently prepared to meet him kindly, when he opened the door.

Every thing, which had characterized his person, three years before, as the "*active partner, in the firm of Bobb and Binnacle,*" had gone by the board, as we sailors say. He was plainly but neatly dressed; and a patched boot and rusty hat, though I noticed a better one for Sunday, hanging in the corner, indicated an attention to economy. After a kind greeting, we sat down together. Bethiah spread a neat cloth, on a little pine table, and was making preparations for their frugal meal. —"Captain Jennings," said her husband, a little of the old leaven of pride mantling upon his cheek, "I am afraid we can give you nothing better than a roast potato, for dinner." —"Now," said I, "look here, if you give me any other title than Brother David, I'll be off, and I want nothing better than a roast potato, provided you've got any salt." —As I said this, I gave him a hearty shake by the hand. —The tear came into his eye. "Excuse my weakness," said he, "but I have seen so much of the cold side of the world, for some years, that I am scarcely prepared for the other."

We ate our simple dinner, with an excellent relish. After it was over, "Now," said I, "let's have a short talk. I must go back, to-night. I understand from Bethiah, that you have settled with your creditors, and are earning about three or four hundred dollars a year, as a clerk in a wholesale store. That will not do. Cook, who has kept store in the village, for forty years, has got old, and rich, and wants to sell out; now I want to make a temperance store of it; and, if you can be happy in the country, and are willing to take it, I'll buy the stock and stand for you: I've got old Cook's terms and the refusal in writing."

Nothing could surpass the satisfaction, expressed by Bethiah and her husband, at this proposal. I returned, and closed the bargain; and, in less than a fortnight, Mr. Bobb was behind the counter, in full operation; Bethiah was settled down with our old father and mother, in the spot where she was born; her twins were creeping over the bank of violets, at the back of the house, where she had crept, when a child; and her baby was rocking in

the cradle, which had been occupied, by four generations.

The next Sabbath, when we were all collected together, in the family pew, there was a general expression of satisfaction, on the countenances of our friends and neighbors : and there were tears in many eyes, when Parson Cooley, now threescore and ten years of age, preached a moving discourse from that beautiful passage, in the thirty-seventh psalm, *I have been young, and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

About two years after this happy reunion of our family, our excellent minister received a letter, from a clergyman in the city, communicating information, respecting my miserable brother. After a career of infidelity and intemperance, he was, as the writer supposed, upon his death bed, in the last stages of consumption. The good man, who sent this information to Parson Cooley, had visited the dying young man repeatedly, and described

his mind to be in such a state, that he desired to die, but for the wish to live, that he might atone for his transgressions. As family resemblance will sometimes appear to be lost, in a present generation ; and return, with all its freshness, in that which succeeds ; so those religious impressions, which are made upon the youthful heart, by some faithful hand, and of which no trace may be seen, through a series of frivolous years, will sometimes return to sustain the tottering steps of one, who had been lost by the way side ; and may ultimately prove the means of salvation, through God's boundless mercy, in a dying hour.

It was thought prudent to conceal this intelligence from my parents, for the present : and, agreeably to the wish he had expressed, to see some of the family, before he died, I immediately set forth upon this melancholy embassy.

I reached the wretched hovel, to which I had been directed, as speedily as possible. I did not disclose my name to the miserable

object, who came to the door, but simply inquired, if Absalom Jennings was there, and how he was. The old woman, who let me in, answered, that the doctor, whom the clergyman had sent there, thought he could not live long. She added that the leader of the Free-thinkers had never visited him, during his sickness, which had continued several weeks ; but that several of the followers had been there ; and that two of them were then up stairs.— I passed up a narrow stairway, and arrived at a little apartment, the door of which was partly open. I listened, for a moment, to the closing words of a conversation, between these emissaries of Satan, these devils incarnate, upon earth, and my dying brother.—“ Well, Jennings,” said one of them, “ out with it, what do you think now, do you believe there is a God ? ”—I heard nothing but a deep groan, which went to my heart.—“ Come,” said the other, “ speak out, if you believe there is a God, we won’t come here again.”—“ Johnson,” said my poor brother, in a voice of bitter anguish, and in

words, which were uttered, as if they came from the bottom of his soul ; and, I am sure, they went to the bottom of mine, “ I am afraid there is a God ! ”—These demons in human shape rose to leave the apartment. As they passed near me,—“ Never set your cloven feet again,” said I in a whisper, “ within the chamber of this dying sinner.”—“ Why what business is it of yours ? ” said one of them. To avoid confusion in such a place, I followed him quietly down stairs, and taking him by the shoulder, “ This wretched young man,” said I, “ is the son of my father and my mother : enter his apartment again, and, if you do not believe in God, I will give you good reason to believe in man, for I will break every bone in your skin.”

They walked off, in evident alarm ; and I returned to the apartment. I crept softly to the chamber. I saw, upon a miserable pallet, a pale emaciated man, whose eyes were shut, and whose features I studied attentively, for some time, before I could discover enough to

satisfy me, that I beheld the wreck of a ruined brother. Nothing remained of the full features, the smooth forehead, the prominent black eye, or the ruddy complexion. The features, and especially the nose and cheek bones, were sharpened in a remarkable manner ; the forehead was checkered by the signet of premature old age ; the face had all the paleness of a corpse ; and the eye, which was still closed, appeared deeply sunken beneath the projecting eyebrows.—I approached closely to the bed.—“Absalom,” said I ;—He opened his eyes, and turned upon me those lights, so soon to be extinguished in the grave.—“Absalom,” I repeated, “do you not know me ?”—“Oh, David,” he exclaimed, “is it you !” and, covering his face with the bed-clothes, he became convulsed with sorrow. “My poor brother !” said I, for my heart yearned towards him, as I sat down beside him, on the pallet of straw, and took his long, lean hand in my own.—“Oh David,” said he, “can you love me now ?” and he drew my

hand to his parched lips, and bathed it in tears.

I sent for the physician, who positively forbade his being moved, as I had wished, into better lodgings. I therefore made the best arrangement, in my power, for his comfort, and prepared to remain with him, during the night. He appeared to be overwhelmed with a grateful sense of this trifling act of humanity. The strongest wish of his heart, which he frequently repeated, was the desire of seeing his father, and asking his forgiveness. I accordingly despatched a messenger to Parson Cooley, requesting him to open the matter to my father, and come to the city with him, as soon as he conveniently could.

They arrived before noon, on the following day. The interview was very distressing. My poor old father no sooner entered the room, than this wretched young man, by an unexpected and extraordinary effort, got out of his bed, and, upon his hands and knees, for he could not walk, crawled to his feet and exclaimed, "Father, forgive me, before I die."

My father was greatly shocked by his appearance ; and the exertion undoubtedly shortened the period of my poor brother's existence.

After taking a little nourishment, he appeared so much better, that I felt almost inclined to think he might recover : but it was only the flashing and flickering of life's lamp, before it is extinguished forever.

During this interval he begged his father and Parson Cooley to sit near him. " Do you not trace all your misery to the use of ardent spirit, Absalom ? " said the good minister.—" No sir," he replied, " I never drank any, till about eighteen months ago, but I became extremely fond of wine ; and the first time, that I went to an Infidel meeting, I was intoxicated with wine, which I drank at the bars of the theatre. When I could no longer obtain wine, as the means of intoxication, I resorted to ardent spirit, because it was cheaper ; and finally the fatal relish for ardent spirit destroyed my taste, in a great measure, for milder stimulants. Intoxication drove me to

the brothel ; and the doctrines, taught at the Infidel meetings, justified my conduct in going there. When I became conscious of an oppressive burthen, in the form of crime, I was delighted to be told, and to be convinced, that such things, as I had thought sinful, were perfectly innocent. The leader of the Infidels tried to produce this conviction on my mind ; I was desirous of being convinced ; and, at length, I mistook the desire to be convinced for the conviction itself.”—After a short pause, he continued as follows ; “ A man, who has committed theft, would be glad to believe, that there was no judge on earth ; for then he could not be tried here ; and a man, who has committed all sorts of crimes, would be glad to believe, that there is no God in heaven ; for then he could not be tried hereafter, and to him the JUDGMENT never cometh. In my hours of intoxication I was more than ever disposed to justify the doctrines of infidelity ; and, when listening to lectures upon infidelity, I was the more ready to justify the

practice of intoxication, and of all other crimes. I believe the leader, who lectures upon infidelity, to be an unprincipled villain, and that he preaches these doctrines, because they are so much more comforting to a hoary headed impenitent wretch, than the doctrines of the cross. May God of his infinite goodness forgive me my offences, and an abandoned and profligate old man, for leading me to destruction."

The whole of his physical and intellectual power appeared to be exhausted, by this last effort. He dropped his head on one side, and there followed a slight convulsion.—I went instantly to his bedside ;—his eyes were glazed ;—he was fast locked in the arms of death ;—the spirit of the penitent infidel had fled.

Our good minister supported my old father from the apartment. By my advice, they returned immediately home. In due time, the earth received its tribute ; and I returned to the village.

It was a remarkable coincidence, that on

the very next Sabbath, in reading the scriptures, Parson Cooley opened to the eighteenth chapter of the second book of Samuel ; and when he pronounced the words of David's lamentation, in the concluding verse, " Oh, my son, Absalom, my son," the good old clergyman could scarcely speak for his emotion.

Time, though it cannot obliterate the recollection of such misery as this, has already mitigated our affliction.—My parents are still living, at a good old age. Their chief employment is a cheerful preparation for death. My sister and her husband, with their flock of little ones, are prosperous and happy.

I sometimes encounter an individual, perhaps the member of some temperance society, who scrupulously abstains from ardent spirit, under its specific name ; but who is eminently qualified, not only for the commission of folly, but for the perpetration of crime, by the employment of some milder stimulant : upon such occasions, the declaration of my unhappy brother, on his death bed, comes forcibly be-

fore me ; the use of wine alone brought him to infidelity and ruin !

I never meet an individual, who does not *believe*, that there *is* a God, but who cannot, by any human possibility, *know* that there *is not*, without a vivid and painful recollection of the life and death of this wretched young man. The dying words of a poor penitent Infidel, can never be forgotten, "*I am afraid there is a God !*"

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I AM AFRAID

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